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Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 5269, An Act Regulating Mixed Martial Arts Matches  
February 22, 2011

Dear Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, and distinguished members of the Public Safety Committee:

Sports have historically been a great equalizer in America. For instance, in Connecticut, a visit to any UConn game, you will see a great cross section of the diversity in which we have in our state. Sports often provide a common language amongst people who superficially may not have a lot in common. There is a relatively new language emerging and it is called Mixed Martial Arts (MMA).

As a commercially viable sport, it is new, but to the thousands of Americans who have stepped in to a dojo, watched *The Karate Kid*, or participated in a high school wrestling tournament, it's hard to argue MMA is 'new.' In the US, martial arts has been a culture in which many people have shared an experience about discipline, respect, responsibility, overcoming obstacles, and working hard. It is not surprising that martial arts have been popular in the US given these shared values and principles.

It is time that we in CT, educate ourselves about the sport and allow for safe, legal MMA events. I hope to one day take my nephew and niece to a MMA event in CT the same way a father would want to take their son or daughter to a Yankee or Red Sox Game.

I recognize and fully understand why there may be concerns about legalizing a potentially dangerous sport, (that had an awfully brutal beginning). For the record, there are more injury related deaths in American football than in MMA and we wouldn't tell our new Hartford Colonials that the sport is "too dangerous." Boxing champion, and New Haven native, Chad Dawson isn't in a sport that's too dangerous; he actually participates in one of the disciplines of Mixed Martial Arts.

As MMA continues to gain in popularity and we see a proliferation of gyms like the Lion's Den in my home city of Middletown CT, we in CT need a way to regulate the safety of participants. Some would argue CT needs regulated MMA because of the average expected MMA gate which would bring in much needed tax revenue and jobs at event centers like our under utilized XL Center and Convention Center.

It has been hard for me to write a compelling argument that isn't emotionally charged. For me, MMA is the reason I know I will spend time with my best friend. The same way some friends argue about Yankees vs. Red Sox, we argue about Chute Boxe vs. American Kickboxing Academy. Many have water cooler talk about the greatest basketball player of all time; we have heated debates on the importance of Royce Gracie and Fedor to the sport. MMA is our common language. Legalization of MMA in CT would provide for legitimization for the sport, and Manchester CT native, Dana White (President of UFC) could bring his product back to his home state. He is an example of the CT entrepreneurial spirit.

Legalizing MMA provides a way to celebrate a CT native, protect athletes, provide an outlet for community through the values of the martial arts, and bring in much needed revenue.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Quentin Phipps